

Thwart plans to restore direct military rule in the country!

The Macapagal-Arroyo regime continues to expand and intensify the fascist suppression of democratic rights. Militarization is being intensified both in the countryside and cities. Anti-terrorist terror and disorder are relentlessly being fomented. Macapagal-Arroyo's bureaucratic-military rule is rapidly leading to the restoration of outright military rule in the Philippines.

Despite the absence of a formal declaration of a state of emergency or martial law, there is relentless fascist suppression and dominance of military power in the various aspects of social life.

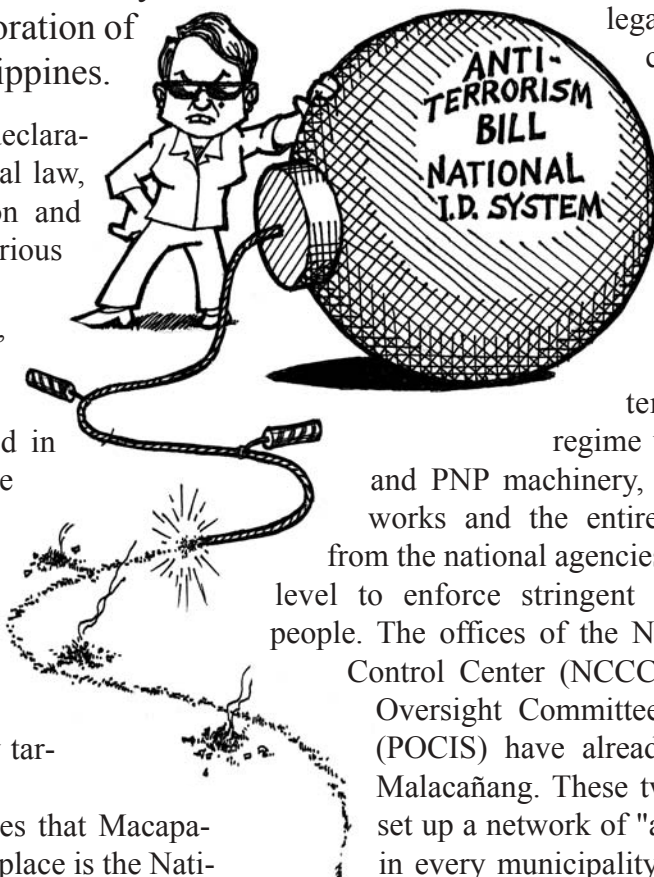
Within the span of a few days, curfews, checkpoints, body searches and inspections of personal belongings were approved and implemented in Metro Manila and other cities. There are likewise plans to arm the barangay tanod and deploy "secret marshalls" in buses, airplanes and other places. Students in schools where activists abound are subjected to strict inspections after such schools were declared as "likely targets of terrorist attack."

Also included among the measures that Macapagal-Arroyo so eagerly wants to put in place is the National ID System, which is set to be implemented fol-

lowing a decision by the National Security Council. It is a means to facilitate surveillance and control of the people. Fidel Ramos pushed for this measure in 1996 as did Joseph Estrada in 1999. But they both failed due to the people's all-out resistance as well as opposition from other politicians.

The anti-terrorism bill is likewise being deliberated again in congress. It aims to legalize the suppression of civil rights, just as what the Marcos dictatorship did through martial law. There is also a proposal to grant Macapagal-Arroyo "emergency powers."

Through the "anti-terrorism" slogan, the regime utilizes the entire AFP and PNP machinery, local intelligence networks and the entire civilian bureaucracy from the national agencies down to the barangay level to enforce stringent measures against the people. The offices of the National Command and Control Center (NCCC) and the Presidential Oversight Committee on Internal Security (POCIS) have already been set up inside Malacañang. These two offices will in turn set up a network of "anti-terror committees" in every municipality and "Gabay ng Masa Aksyon Centers (GMA Centers)" in every barangay to



I coordinate the psywar campaign, principally against the revolutionary movement. Led by Sec. Rigoberto Tiglao, NCCC and POCIS will also be used as Macapagal-Arroyo's electoral campaign machinery until 2004.

IT IS US IMPERIALISM and the Macapagal-Arroyo regime that have taken full advantage of, and manipulated, the bombings. There are many indications that it is the military itself that is behind the spate of bombings, bomb threats and "discoveries" of explosives in other places. It is only the military that has the capability and the interest to perpetrate such activities.

All these incidents dovetail with the AFP's campaign to intimidate and terrorize the people within the framework of the Bush doctrine. The campaign was initiated as early as August-September and marked by the propagation of utterly baseless stories meant to tarnish the integrity of the Party and New People's Army. Its sinister objective is to incite hatred and fear against the revolutionary movement.

One such fabricated story dealt with the so-called deployment in Metro Manila of 150 NPA "sparrow units" and plans to bomb the LRT and other crowded places. The bombings in Kidapawan City, Zamboanga and Metro Manila have all been blamed on the NPA. There have also been allegations of an alliance between the NPA and the Abu Sayyaf bandit group.

Malacañang and the AFP have been creating widespread terror to make it appear that repressive measures are necessary to protect the people "against terrorist threats." Macapagal-Arroyo wants the people to accept, or create the impression that they accept, the imposition of anti-democratic measures.

She also wants to rationalize the imposition of a state of emergency that would lead to outright military rule.

This psywar campaign, with its attendant bombings, are all part of the regime's intensified counter-revolutionary war. Dubbed Oplan Gordian Knot by the AFP, its principal target is the armed revolutionary movement as well as legal organizations and parties, particularly Bayan Muna.

By putting "anti-terrorist" measures in place, the Macapagal-Arroyo regime aims to use them primarily against the people and their revolutionary movement. In the face of the people's spreading anger and protests against the oppressive and exploitative policies of the reactionary state and the rapid advance of the armed revolutionary movement in the countryside, the regime has grown more desperate to defend the rotting and bankrupt ruling system.

On the other hand, as the social crisis further intensifies due to the policy dictates of US imperialism, the reactionary regime clings ever desperately to the coat-tails of its imperialist master. THE MACAPAGAL-ARROYO regime is the most reliable endorser in Southeast Asia of the Bush government's bellicose foreign policy. It now takes the lead in pushing the US agenda in the region.

Macapagal-Arroyo supports US maneuvers to obtain "access rights" for its troops to enter countries in Southeast Asia. For this, Macapagal-Arroyo has been pushing for an "anti-terrorism accord" among the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand and other countries in the region.



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Frustrate Oplan Gordian Knot!

Oplan Gordian Knot is the new name given by AFP chief of staff Benjamin Defensor to the counterrevolutionary war. Its objective is to intensify the war and inveigle the revolutionary forces into engaging in a conflict conducted on purely military terms.

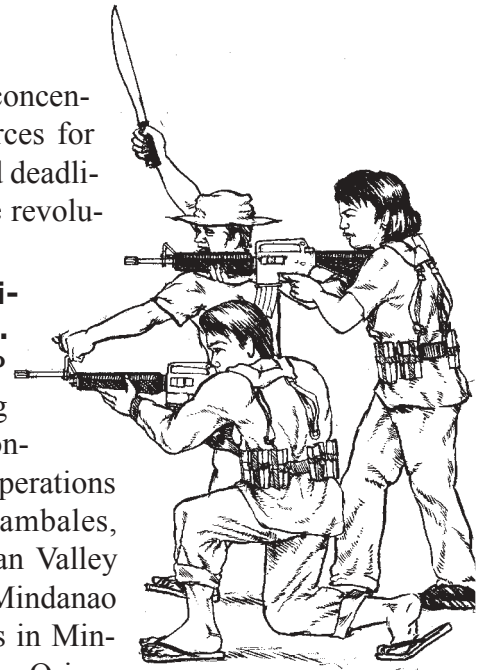
Oplan Gordian Knot is based on Oplan Bantay Laya which was drafted by Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes on July 17, 2002. It is no different from previous plans, except for Defensor's directive to use "any and all means," which blatantly endorses a war without rules and widespread military abuses against the people.

It stresses the escalation of conflict, intelligence work and psywar. Due to the difficulty of defeating the revolutionary movement, it stresses the "collaboration,

coordination and concentration" of their forces for "stronger, faster and deadlier" resistance to the revolutionary movement.

Intensified military operations.

The AFP and PNP have been launching coordinated and concentrated military operations in Bulacan, Zambales, Pangasinan, Cagayan Valley and Northeastern Mindanao in addition to fronts in Mindoro, Bohol, Davao Orien-



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The US already uses the Philippines as a base of operations for American troops. It utilizes "joint training exercises" between the US and the Philippines to maintain the permanent presence of American soldiers in the country and intervene directly in the counterrevolutionary war in the Philippines.

One of the countries opposed to this objective is Indonesia. Since September 11, 2002, Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri has refused to submit completely to US policies. The bombing in Bali, Indonesia on October 12 is believed to be the handiwork of secret military operatives of the US. More than 180 tourists died in the blasts. The Bush government has used this incident to pressure Megawati Sukarnoputri's government to support the US' terrorist war.

THERE is a strong tendency towards outright military rule. It is Macapagal-Arroyo who serves as the most rabid endorser of militarism and US imperialism's bellicose policy. She plays her role as AFP commander-in-chief to the hilt. She is becoming a Marcos clone.

The people in their numbers thoroughly resist the militarism of the Macapagal-Arroyo regime. They stand ready, through their organizations, to resist and

frustrate the Macapagal-Arroyo government's plans to effect direct military rule.

A broad section of the people is demanding that the government set aside a purely military solution to the civil war and is calling for the resumption of peace talks between the GRP and NDFP to resolve the roots of the armed conflict. A broad section of the people likewise objects to Macapagal-Arroyo's blind endorsement of every US directive and policy.

The people continue to wage struggles against increases in oil prices and electrical service charges, against brazen corruption, for wage increases and hikes in the farmgate prices of peasants' produce. All these struggles expose Macapagal-Arroyo's antipeople and pro-imperialist regime and further isolate it from the people.

In the countryside, the New People's Army continues to launch tactical offensives of varying scale, marking the advance of revolutionary struggle in the countryside and expanding support from the peasants masses.

Macapagal-Arroyo's continued hold on power relies mainly on the US and the AFP's support. It is a tenuous hold because it does not enjoy the people's support. As the Macapagal-Arroyo regime insists on enforcing pro-imperialist and fascist policies, the conditions that enable the people to take action to overthrow the puppet regime rapidly emerge. **AB**

tal, Davao del Norte, Negros, Quezon, Laguna, Bicol, Leyte and Aurora that have already been prioritized previously.

In this regard, the AFP and PNP have been beefing themselves up. No less than P9 billion will be added to the AFP's 2003 budget for additional forces, CAFGU expansion, arms procurement and other expenses. The AFP has pinned its hopes on forthcoming military assistance from the US in the form of Balikatan-type joint military exercises, "advice," weapons and actual covert coordinated operations of AFP and American troops.

Psywar. Oplan Gordian Knot's essential element is the intensification of psywar campaigns whose objective is to portray the CPP and NPA as "terrorists" and "criminals." Towards this end, they disseminate the dirtiest and most baseless propaganda to incite fear and hatred against the NPA.

They tarnish the revolutionary integrity of the NPA by cooking up issues such as "mass graves" (the exhumation, or discovery of burial places, of supposed NPA victims), "the imposition of all kinds of taxes that burden the masses," "the collection of protection money from jueteng operations because they are going hungry," "the existence of big marijuana plantations," "the masterminding of bombings" and "the killing of innocent civilians." Even if tactical offensives hit legitimate targets, the former are portrayed as "acts of terrorism."

In a related development, Malacañang and the AFP have been actively pressuring the mass media. Not only radio and television stations but national and local newspapers are also being pressured not to give time or space to spokespersons of the Party, the NPA and the revolutionary movement, or to downplay the relevance of news regarding the latter.

Bayan Muna is being maliciously linked to the armed revolutionary movement to make it a target of military operations. They are deathly afraid of Bayan

Muna because it enjoys widespread support from the people.

The regime makes it appear that it is interested in peace talks through its "single peace agreement,"

and its "local peace talks" and "local peace zones" schemes that have no other objective but to effect the surrender of the revolutionary forces.

"Civac" against the NPA.

Macapagal-Arroyo desperately wants to "snatch the sympathy" of the people away from the revolutionary movement,

especially in the countryside. She also desperately wants to make it appear that the people support her antipeople measures. Towards this end, the regime has directed the all-out mobilization of the bureaucracy from the national agencies to the barangay level.

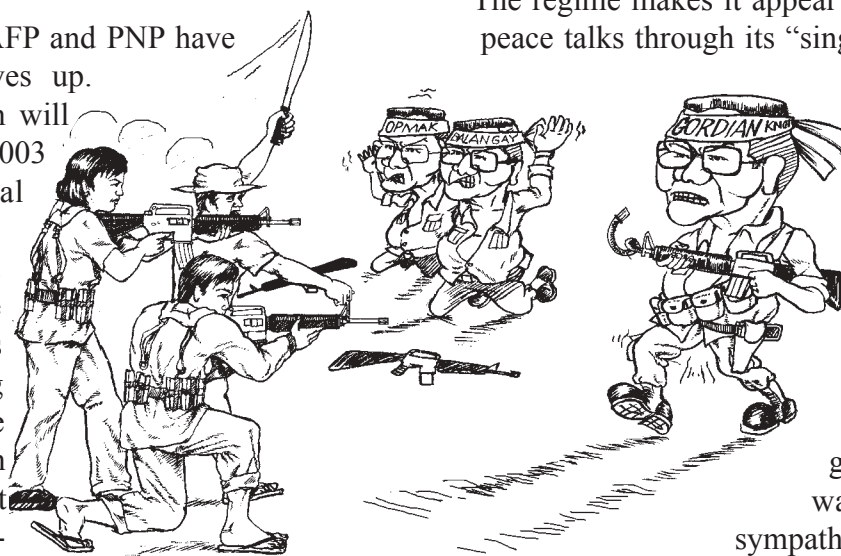
It conducts anti-communist conferences, rallies and gatherings using barangay officials, vigilante groups, its assets within the church, Contras, surrenderees and police-civilian organizations.

It also conducts "socio-economic" projects for show to deceive the people and create the impression that the government addresses the people's needs.

OPLAN GORDIAN KNOT will surely result in worse abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law by the military, especially with the call to undertake "any and all means" to destroy the revolutionary movement. Defensor has openly granted his commanders the authority to forget the rules for now.

Oplan Gordian Knot and the "all-out war" must be resisted and thwarted by advancing all aspects of revolutionary work: in the military field, the mass movement and agrarian revolution, in the united front and in propaganda work.

There is particular relevance and urgency in stressing our propaganda work to actively counter the lies being disseminated by the regime. We must pay attention to the propaganda work of leading Party organs and make sure that the appropriate machinery and re-



see "Oplan Gordian Knot", p. 5

Abduction and forced disappearances growing

October 16. The body of Nemesio Malcil, 40, a pastor of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, was found in Baco, Oriental Mindoro full of stab wounds. Pastor Malcil had not returned home since he was taken from his house in San Teodoro, Oriental Mindoro by elements of the 204th Bde on October 14.

October 7. Domingo de las Alas, Bayan Muna municipal coordinator for Ibaan, Batangas was last seen by his wife at the jeepney terminal. De las Alas was on his way to Manila to attend to some papers. According to his wife, de las Alas was followed by men riding an owner-type jeep. Upon arriving in Manila, de las Alas was able to call his son to say “there’s a problem” before the line was cut. This was the last they heard from him. Bayan Muna has

demanding that the military admit responsibility for de las Alas’ disappearance and release him immediately.

October 5. Dino Bangkiling, a 40-year-old Mangyan from Oriental Mindoro, was “invited” and tortured for more than two days. No less than 204th Bde commander Col. Jovito Palparan himself tortured and interrogated him. He was accused of being an NPA supporter and was being forced to admit involvement in, or knowledge of, the disappearance of a certain David Caldeto and two others. Bangkiling was released after being able to prove he had nothing to do with, nor had any knowledge of, the things the military had questioned him about. Before releasing him, the military warned him that it would attack and torment his community if he told anyone about his ordeal. **AB**

The antiguerrilla war of the AFP and PNP

- involves “laying siege to” or combining various commands and concentrating them on a number of particular target areas believed by the AFP to be strongholds of the revolutionary armed movement.
- coordination of AFP and PNP operations
- use of Special Forces as the main force for penetrating and annihilating guerrilla units. Subsuming Light Reaction Companies (LRC) and other Independent Companies, aside from area Scout Rangers Companies (SRC)/Special Forces Companies (SFC) and local Reconnaissance Companies (Recon Coy) to the national command.
- expanding the PNP Special Action Forces (SAF). There are only three SAFs as of now—one at the HQ, one in Mindoro and one in Diwalwal, Compostela Valley.
- focusing on priority barangays within fronts (500 out of 41,986 barangays).
- deploying in these barangays, companies with Modified Special Operations Teams (MSOT)—undersize platoons or oversize squads that strain to mimic the NPA’s style of work in a desperate attempt to “win the hearts and minds” of the people.
- setting up detachments along the peripheries of strongholds of the revolutionary movement.
- expanding and strengthening the CAFGU.
- coordination with the US military through Balikatan-type joint military training exercises, “advice” and weapons from the US and actual secret coordinated operations of AFP and American troops. **AB**

from “Oplan Gordian Knot”, p. 4

sources are available for us to thoroughly, creatively and tirelessly explain our stand and expose the enemy’s lies.

Clarify before the broadest possible number of people the correctness of our revolutionary resistance, the relevance to and benefits derived by, the people from the armed struggle, agrarian revolution and building the people’s democratic government.

We must show that it is the revolutionary move-

ment, and not the reactionary, puppet and militarist Macapagal-Arroyo regime that is sincere with respect to the peace talks. Show that under the regime, peace talks were obstructed in accordance with the desire of militarists and US imperialism; and that the “single peace agreement” does not aim to resolve the roots of the civil war but wants only to discard previous agreements and effect the surrender of the revolutionary forces to the reactionary state. **AB**

Abduction of children to force parents' surrender

Elements of the Philippine Army's 8th Infantry Division abducted 18-year-old Rosa Guadiana on August 22, in Catarman, Northern Samar. Rosa is the daughter of Comrade Abdias Guadiana, one of the consultants of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) for the peace talks. Rosa was abducted to force her father to surface and surrender. According to witnesses, an unidentified man sat beside Rosa while she was riding a bus bound for Catbalogan and interrogated her. The man rode the

bus from Barangay Maulong, Catbalogan right in front of the 8th ID headquarters. The NDFP has condemned the AFP's continued refusal to surface Rosa.

Rosa's case is not the first of its kind in Eastern Visayas. In December 2000, nine-year-old Levi Mabanana was abducted by a unit of the 34th IB. Levi was taken to force the surrender of his mother and brother, who are both Red fighters. Levi has not been released to date.

National budget for 2003

A budget for waging war against the people

The Macapagal-Arroyo regime's budget for 2003 is focused on further strengthening the military machinery to the detriment of social services. The Macapagal-Arroyo regime has raised the budget allocation for the AFP by P4 billion. This is exclusive of the P5 billion earmarked for the AFP Modernization Plan.

Department of National Defense. Increased by P4.7 billion, for a total of P65.135 billion.

Philippine Military Academy. Received an additional P30.2 million (meanwhile, the state colleges and universities budget was slashed by P143.9 million and the Philippine Science High School and Science Education Institute budgets, by P28.3 million).

Intelligence fund. Received an additional P14.2 million, for a total of P1.2 billion. Six-hundred fifty million pesos (P650 million) or more than half, has been allocated to the Office of the President.

PNP. Increased by P2.3 billion, including P2.1 billion earmarked for pay increases of policemen and P300 million for recruiting 9,000 new policemen, firemen and jailguards.

On the other hand, the following suffered budget cuts: housing (P307.5 million), agriculture and agrarian reform (P424.1 million), health services (P502.2 million) and social insurance, welfare and employment (P184.7 million). **AB**

Why will the antiguerrilla war fail?

As in the past, the AFP's antiguerrilla war "Oplan Gordian Knot" will fail because it defends a corrupt, oppressive and exploitative system. There is no effective tactic that the enemy can use to defeat the revolutionary movement because the latter enjoys the support of the people. Despite the AFP and PNP's terrorism and brutality, the masses militantly take a stand and repudiate fascist rule in the countryside.

Fighters of the New People's Army will continue using guerrilla warfare tactics wisely and sharply. The NPA will always be able to elude the enemy no matter how much it concentrates its forces.

Because of its adherence to military discipline and due to the depth of mass support, NPA fighters are constantly able to evade concentrated enemy forces. With the help of the masses, the NPA is always able to find opportunities to launch tactical offensives against weak or isolated enemy troops.

There are continuing efforts to raise the military capability and revolutionary consciousness of our valiant Red fighters. The recent resounding tactical offensives of the NPA in Compostela Valley, Pampanga, Bulacan, Quezon, Mindoro, Leyte, Samar, Bohol, Negros and other areas are proof that the revolutionary movement continues to gain strength. **AB**

Armed struggle reaps victories nationwide

NPA raids 74th IB detachment in Quezon

The New People's Army's Maria Theresa de Leon in Far South Quezon launched a successful raid on the detachment of the 74th IB in Barangay Abuyon, San Narciso, Quezon on October 4.

Contrary to reports from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) that the sole enemy casualty was a CAFGU element who was killed, 11 soldiers died and five were wounded out of the 18-man detachment.

In an open letter dated October 6, the NPA belied military reports in the media that the raid targeted the nearby Keangnam Construction Company. The NPA said it had no reason to undertake punitive measures against the company.

The NPA suffered no casualties and no civilians were caught in the crossfire.

The NPA said that residents had long been demanding punishment for the 74th IB for its many crimes against the people of the Bondoc Peninsula.

Occidental Mindoro police chief punished

A six-man NPA team meted punishment last October 17 on SPO4 Christopher Pacaul, PNP chief of Abra de Ilog, Occidental Mindoro. This ended his long record of human rights violations. Seized from Pacaul was his 9 mm pistol.

NPA launches successful counter-ambush against RHB

Six elements of the Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (RHB) bandit group were killed in a counter-ambush by the NPA on the night of October 17 in Kalagiman, Samal, Bataan.

A 15-man unit of the RHB had positioned itself inside a hut alongside a road that would have been traversed by a vehicle ridden by comrades who had just conducted a mass meeting in the barrio. As a precautionary measure against possible ambushes,

however, the comrades chose not to ride a vehicle and instead crossed a rice-field towards the hut where the RHB had taken position.

Although it was the RHB that first opened fire, the comrades were quickly able to return fire. No one was hurt on the NPA side. The fighting lasted 30 minutes.

The following day, the RHB returned to the barrio to terrorize the villagers anew. But the masses flatly repudiated them, saying that they would support only the Party and the NPA.

Destructive quarry activities in Bulacan meted punishment

The NPA took action against the destructive sand quarrying businesses along the Angat River in eastern Bulacan on September 25. Red fighters destroyed big quarrying equipment, including bulldozers and cranes.

The people of Angat are strongly opposed to quarrying because it has dried up sources of irrigation water for about a thousand hectares of farmland as well as sources of drinking water for thousands of families in the area.

The quarrying activities went on despite repeated petitions and mass protest actions. The capitalists behind the quarrying are in cahoots with local government officials. The masses had no other recourse but to seek help from the NPA, which promptly acted on their complaints.

Meanwhile, the NPA launched a successful attack on the headquarters of the 306th Provincial Mobile Group (PMG) in Sampaloc, San Rafael,



Armed struggle reaps victories nationwide



Bulacan on September 30. It was close to midnight when Red fighters surprised the PMG elements who were then gambling. At least six policemen were wounded in the raid.

The police troopers led by Col. Fernando Villanueva in collusion with Gov. Josie dela Cruz, were punished for their long record of violence and destruction

against the people.

7 firearms confiscated in Samar

The NPA seized two M16s, five .45 pistols, magazines and ammunition in three separate offensives launched in Samar in August and September. The operations targeted the PNP and the Philippine Army Engineering Battalion. The offensives were conducted by the Sergio Lobina Command in Barangay Natividad,

San Policarpio, Eastern Samar; and by other NPA units in Bugtong, Tinambacan District, Calbayog City; and Barangay Dolores, Las Navas, Northern Samar.

Camp owned by criminal Abra mayor torched

Red fighters under the NPA Agustin Begnalen Command burned a camp owned by Mayor Clarence “Boyet” Benwaren, a notorious criminal and warlord in Tineg, Abra. Two small buildings and three huts were torched on September 12 as a punitive measure against the Benwaren family’s brutality against the townsfolk.

The Ben’s Vera camp serves as a sanctuary for the Benwarens’ armed men, Philippine Army troops and military intelligence agents. It is also used for the illegal logging activities of the Benwaren family and elements of the 17th IB.

Benwaren was killed on October 29 in Calauan, Laguna by men believed to have been hired by his political rivals.

Victories in Pampanga hailed

The New People’s Army in Pampanga hailed on October 12 the victorious tactical offensives launched nationwide. The NPA said they were “a resounding reply to the regime’s all-out war campaign.” Particularly in Pampanga, the offensives addressed the masses’ longstanding demand to “hit the terrorist AFP and the RHB bandits.” Among the victorious offensives are:

August 26, 2002, 10 a.m. An NPA unit encircled a five-man Recon-Force Team of the Philippine Army’s 69th IB conducting intelligence operations in Sitio Labak, Cauayan, Mexico, Pampanga. Killed in the raid was a sergeant and an intelligence officer while others were seriously wounded. Seized were an M14, an M16, a 9 mm pistol and documents.

August 30, 2002, 5:30 p.m. Red fighters ambushed an RHB bandit group at an irrigation control

complex located along a river in San Patricio, Mexico. The bandits were wiped out in the daring offensive. It was the third ambush against the RHB bandits.

The bandits scampered away during the first encounter on February 14 in San Agustin, Sta. Ana and during the second one on March 11, along the spillway in Sto. Rosario, Mexico. Prior to this, the NPA had punished the RHB’s notorious forces that sowed terror on innocent civilians like Rey “Karla” Lagman and others. The NPA said it obtained revolutionary justice for all of the RHB’s victims.

August 31, 2002, 1 a.m. An NPA unit ambushed elements of a composite intelligence network from the 703rd Bde and the PNP in San Jose, Lubao aboard an owner-type jeep. They had just finished a meeting at a resort. Four enemy forces were killed in the ambush. **AB**

Medical and fact-finding mission in Cagayan, a success; AFP's CIVAC spurned

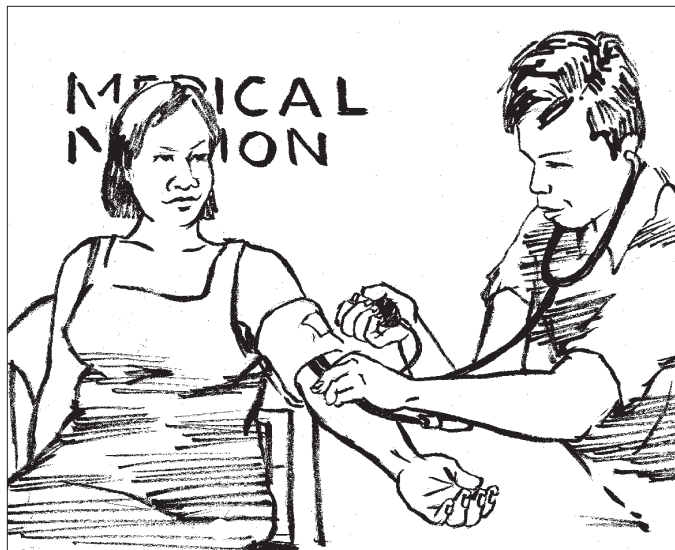
The AFP is severely isolated from the people. This was demonstrated when a successful medical and fact-finding mission (MM-FFM) was launched from September 19-22 in Caruppian, Baggao, Cagayan by CAGIMUNGAN, the inter-municipal peasant association in the province.

The MM-FFM which was conducted by more than 10 health professionals, youth activists, church people and members of progressive institutions, was patronized by more than a thousand people. Its aim was to deliver medical services to the people and investigate reported military abuses against farmers in the three barangays of Caruppian, Ibulo and Bunugan. On the other hand, a 5th ID-sponsored civic action conducted also in Caruppian on September 15 was spurned by the masses.

Along with the MM-FFM, residents of the three barangays issued a petition opposing CAFGU recruitment and exposing the brutality and destruction wrought by the 41st IB on the barriofolk. All the officials of Barangay Caruppian were among those who signed the petition.

On the last day of the activity, a Solidarity Day was held in a school in Caruppian attended by about 300 people. The venue was right beside the barangay hall, which was being used as the headquarters of the 41st IB's Bravo Company. The military was asked to come but only a few watched from outside the school fence. The company commander, Lieutenant Gaffud, hid his face behind a bandana out of shame, when victims of military brutality from the martial law era up to the present spoke, bringing tears to their listeners. The soldiers who were watching from the outside slowly slinked away. They felt the depth of the people's loathing.

An ordinary soldier who happened to come near the gathering was surrounded by youth activists, who explained the issues to him. After hearing their



explanations, he said that he agreed with what the farmers were fighting for because his family, which was also of peasant origin, had the same interests.

The 5th ID was so angry about the boycott of their civac. Very few villagers patronized the civac, even in the very sitio of the barangay where the military headquarters was located, despite the AFP's invitation of villagers from other barrios. Even the band that was brought in and the dance that was organized failed to attract the barriofolk. The few who came hurriedly left because the military went on a drinking spree.

It was not surprising for the villagers to boycott the civac. In their experience, the AFP distributes nothing but expired medicines whenever it conducts civac. There were instances when the wrong medicines were given for certain ailments, causing those who took the medications to feel even worse.

One day after the MM-FFM, farmer-leaders of CAGIMUNGAN conducted a press conference to publicize the human rights violations documented by the fact-finding mission and the barriofolks' petition to boot out the 41st IB.

The military had nothing to say about the cases of military abuse exposed by the mission. **AB**

Liberalization of vegetable and rice imports detrimental to farmers



Important liberalization has dealt a severe blow to local vegetable and rice producers.

In July and August alone, vegetable growers in Benguet lost P21 billion when imported vegetables from Australia, New Zealand and The Netherlands supplanted local vegetables.

When confronted by vegetable farmers in August, Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor said that only 302,405 kilos of vegetables were being imported, an equivalent of 0.17% of the overall demand. He also said that there were only two vegetable importers in the country, with Rustan's Supermarket at the lead.

Montemayor, however, admitted this October that Rustan's imported 266 tons of upland vegetable from January to September, despite the fact that all of the vegetables it imported, such as carrots, potatoes, cabbages, mushrooms and cauliflower, were in sufficient supply in the local market. The vegetable farmers were even more disappointed to find out that not only Rustan's but 13 other companies nationwide import up to 37 kinds of vegetables.

In another mark of the Macapagal-Arroyo regime's surrender of

the national interest in international trade, most of the vegetables imported by the Philippines come from Australia, which imposes many restrictions on its importation of mangoes and other agricultural products from the Philippines.

Montemayor strained to defend the importations, saying they were all legal. Aside from the legal importations, the smuggling of vegetables is also rampant.

Due to huge losses, thousands of vegetable growers from Benguet affiliated with Alyansa dagiti Pesante iti Taeng-Kordilyera or APIT-TAKO, launched a series of protests this October to demand the suspension of the implementation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). In accordance with GATT, quantitative restrictions on the importation of vegetables and other food products have been lifted and tariffs reduced. All tariffs on imported food are set to be abolished by 2004.

As vegetable growers in Benguet are up in arms, the Alyansa ng mga Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon (AMGL) is also waging a campaign to demand a stop to the regime's import liberalization policy. The AMGL asserted that it was

necessary to support local rice producers by providing them subsidies.

GATT prohibits subsidies to farmers.

The AMGL also assailed the involvement of relatives and close associates of Macapagal-Arroyo in rice smuggling. It said that the influx of imported and smuggled rice were behind the slump in palay prices to as low as P5 per kilo, especially during harvest time.

Rice importations from Vietnam, Thailand, Pakistan and India are set to reach 1.14 million metric tons (mt) this year. In the first six months of 2003 alone, the country plans to import one mt.

The AMGL condemned the growing cases of conversion of agricultural land, spurred by no less than the government, and the widespread unemployment and poverty this has engendered in the countryside.

In the face of all this, the AMGL demanded that the Macapagal-Arroyo regime support local agriculture and increase the volume of its palay procurement from Filipino farmers. It demanded the increase of the support price for palay from P7.50 to P15.00 per kilo. **AB**

Campaign vs. hunger gains momentum in Panay

Farmers in Guimaras and Panay reaped gains in their campaign against hunger last August. Through various means and on different occasions, hundreds of farmers acted in concert to demand rice subsidies from the local governments.



In San Lorenzo, Guimaras, peasant leaders held a dialogue with the municipal government and were able to demand 20 sacks of rice. On the other hand, farmers from 31 barrios in Cuartero, Dumarao, Maayon, Jamindan and Tapaz divided among themselves 38 sacks of rice from the provincial government of Capiz.

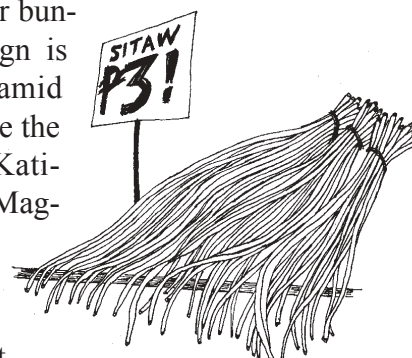
Also in Dumarao, efforts of men from the Bureau of Animal Industry and the 314th PNP Provincial Mobile

Group to deceive and intimidate farmers from Stockfarm, Barangay Bungsuan failed to deter the latter from demanding subsidies from the provincial government. After their collective action, they were able to bring home 48 sacks of rice. The Iloilo local government was likewise compelled to promise subsidies to farmers in Janiuay, Maasin and Oton. Janiuay mayor Frankie Locsin pledged P65,000 for relief from the town's savings.

Hunger is widespread in the entire island of Panay. Rice, sugar and coconut production have slumped. Even the sea yields meager harvests. Total rice production for 2002 in Region 6 is expected to plunge by up to one million metric tons due to successive calamities and the El Niño phenomenon. **AB**

Reduce transport fees for string beans, Bulacan farmers cry

Organized farmers in eastern Bulacan are currently waging a campaign to reduce fees charged for transporting string beans from P3 to P2 per bundle. The campaign is being waged amid efforts to organize the Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid (PKM) chapter in the area.



In a statement, the PKM in eastern Bulacan said that at the rate of P3 per bundle of string beans, truckers earn a total of P9,000 per trip. But they spend only P2,100 per trip for diesel and parking fees and for food and wages for their truck driver and helper. Their net income per trip thus amounts to P6,900.

Said the PKM: "They rake in a whopping P6,900 just for one trip without lifting a finger. We break our backs, planting and cultivating string beans for four months and end up with nothing but a growing list of debts!"

The PKM added: "These financier-transporters have squeezed us dry of our already meager livelihoods! Exacting exorbitant profits on fertilizers and pesticides, imposing high interest rates on cash advances and loans, charging sky-high rental for machinery especially by padding bills of accounts, depressing the price of string beans! And still they overcharge us for transport fees!"

The PKM condemned the landlord-merchants exploiting the farmers. Said the PKM, "the NPA is one with us in advancing our struggle because addressing the interests of the peasantry is the main content of the CPP-NPA program for a people's democratic revolution." **AB**

Macapagal-Arroyo: Enemy of government employees



ment Service Insurance System (GSIS), Pag-ibig, Philhealth and other institutions. With all these deductions, only about P5,000 is left, or an equivalent of P167 per day. This is a far cry from the P532 needed daily for a family's basic needs. Thus, the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA), personal allowance, special bonuses and other benefits in the form

Since Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo took power, she has done nothing but add to the burdens of government employees.

First, she pegged their salaries at very low levels. She flatly denied their longstanding demand for a P3,000 increase in monthly salaries. Worse, she dropped from the budget the 5% salary increase approved by the Estrada regime in 2000. Macapagal-Arroyo has said that her regime would not be giving a single centavo for employees of the civilian bureaucracy in 2003. On the other hand, the regime has allotted more than P5 billion for pay increases of soldiers and policemen.

Government employees were able to win additional benefits in 2001 through collective negotiations with their respective departments. But the regime rescinded these benefits in 2002. Even legislated benefits are being revoked.

All things considered, there is not much difference between the take-home pay of government employees and private sector workers. From his minimum-level monthly pay of P5,800, a rank and file employee is able to allot P193.33 per day for expenses. This amount has yet to be subjected to various deductions by the government for "contributions" to the Govern-

ment Service Insurance System (GSIS), Pag-ibig, Philhealth and other institutions. With all these deductions, only about P5,000 is left, or an equivalent of P167 per day. This is a far cry from the P532 needed daily for a family's basic needs. Thus, the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA), personal allowance, special bonuses and other benefits in the form

of subsidies mean a lot to government employees. Government employees are able to raise their incomes only through waging relentless struggles. They were able to win benefits almost every year from 1998 to 2000. But most of these benefits came in the form of "emergency allowances" that provided temporary relief rather than increases in their basic pay. Actually, they were granted such benefits merely as a consolation and a means of assuaging their discontent.

Government employees, however, have been able to gain salary increases and additional benefits through the Collective Negotiating Agreement or CNA. The CNA is equivalent to the CBA or collective bargaining agreement among private sector workers. In negotiating with the managements of their respective agencies or departments, government employees are able to demand appropriate benefits. They are also able to assert their rights to unionize and to have job security.

The CNA has also been a key in recovering benefits abolished with the enactment of the Salary Standardization Law (SSL). Under the SSL, the COLA is granted at the department or agency level based on the availability of funds. Government employees are now waging a struggle to have the COLA granted on a nationwide basis. In 2000 and again in 2002, govern-

ment unions won cases filed before the Supreme Court granting the COLA to all government employees.

Militancy vs. suppression of union rights

Government unions have been able to assert their rights and welfare with remarkable determination and zeal this year. Many unions were able to gain good concessions and several departments and agencies were compelled to recognize and respect union rights.

There were a number of cases where employees militantly took a stand against corrupt and oppressive government officials. They include, among others, the exposé by Department of Education employees of former secretary Raul Roco; and by BIR employees of bureau chief Rene Bañez. Prior to this, SSS employees successfully ousted the corrupt and “dictatorial” Vitaliano Nañagas.

Macapagal-Arroyo has tried but failed to impose a 10-year moratorium on CNAs due to stiff opposition from government employees. Instead, she has imposed a moratorium on “signing bonuses,” an incentive granted to employees whenever a CNA is signed. From experience, each employee receives from P3,000 to P20,000 as “signing bonus.”

Macapagal-Arroyo has likewise been intimidating and threatening government employees. Cases have been filed against SSS employees who joined protests. Others have been threatened with dismissal should they join other mass actions.

The suppression of their rights to unionize, negotiate and strike is a serious matter to government employees. Even if these rights are enshrined in the reactionary constitution, employees are strictly prohibited from waging protests, mass actions and strikes during office hours. There is a big need to continue organizing government employees into unions. As of now, there are only 903 registered unions in the public sector. There are 1.4 million government employees nationwide. Out of the registered unions, only a little over 290 (32%) are recognized as negotiating agents.

Mass termination due to privatization

Government employees continue to confront the issue of mass terminations due to the privatization program. They have so far been able to block attempts to privatize big agencies such as the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR) and the National Food Authority. Nonetheless, government employees are aware of the fact that the regime will seek other ways of effecting privatization and will push ahead with its schemes as soon as the protests die down.

Among those who are up against one of the biggest fights are employees of public corporations. After securing the approval of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act, the regime has redoubled its efforts to privatize NAPOCOR and other related corporations. Transco had already been privatized before this. This will mean the dismissal of 11,000 government employees. Employees of five agencies that are set to be privatized are likewise facing an intense battle after the Department of Housing and Urban Development was set up. Lately, BIR employees resisted plans to privatize the bureau through the formation of the Internal Revenue Management Authority (IRMA) that would terminate more than 6,000 employees. There are also proposals to privatize the Bureau of Customs, which will also lead to the dismissal of employees.

The Macapagal-Arroyo regime uses a tactic that had been tried in the past by the Estrada regime to dismiss employees. Instead of going through the long and complicated process of termination, it merely cuts off funds for an agency, until the latter is eventually dissolved. Estrada did just that in the case of the National Stud Farm and the Economic Intelligence and Investigation Bureau.

In September, Macapagal-Arroyo attempted to dissolve 14 small government agencies and terminate 10,000 employees, allegedly as a cost-cutting measure by the government. She said that up to P1.6 billion



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see "Government Employees against GMA", p. 14

The scandalous corruption of the Arroyos

On October 3, Philippine Estate Authority (PEA) director Sulpicio Tagud, along with Plunder Watch, Bayan Muna and others, filed a plunder case against cronies of the Arroyos within the PEA board of directors and their co-conspirator JD Construction. This is in regard to the overpricing by more than P600 million of the construction costs of the President Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard (PDMB). It is but one of the anomalies and extortion cases involving the Arroyos, their cronies and "collectors."

Corruption is very rampant under the Macapagal-Arroyo regime. The Philippines, in fact, is the 11th most corrupt in a field of 102 countries, according to Transparency International, a private organization that monitors corruption levels in various countries.

Thus, it has become ever clearer that the Macapagal-Arroyo regime is no different from the despised Estrada regime. In fact, it is even more desperate for funds since it has very limited resources left to exploit. Also, if the regime does not engage in some hocus-pocus, Macapagal-Arroyo is likely to lose the 2004 elections. She is in dire need of huge amounts of funds to

equal if not surpass Estrada's ability to manufacture and buy votes.

Conduit bank

On October 17, the covert and anomalous purchase by Macapagal-Arroyo propagandist Dante Ang of a Makati-based bank was exposed. As early as April, Ang had already acquired majority control of BankWise Inc. (formerly known as Bank Dharmala) for P575 million. For this, Ang used Seed Capital, a company owned by a certain Roberto Guevara, who was also involved in the issuance of P1 billion worth of anomalous PeACE Bonds last year.

Ang is believed to have bought the bank to use it as a conduit for kickbacks to be received by his boss Macapagal-Arroyo from the P100 billion fund allotted for loans to small- and medium-scale businesses. The funds will be lent at interest rates lower than those prevailing in the market. It is widely believed that these funds will be used for bribes in the 2004 polls.

Extortion from private contracts

The controversy over the overpricing of the PDMB had hardly died down when more overpricing anomalies were exposed in quick succession.



One recent exposé involves the overpricing of construction costs for Bay Boulevard, the thoroughfare that will link the PDMB to Roxas Boulevard. This deal forms part of the anomalous contract used by the regime to bribe JD Construction, the contractor hired for the PDMB. Documents indicate that the PEA allotted P5.2 million for building this road despite JD Construction's original estimate of P2.5 million.

Also exposed this October was Justice Sec. Hernando Perez's coercion of the Department of Public Works and Highways to grant JD Construction the contract for building the Bauan-Mabini highway in Batangas. According to the DPWH, JD Construction uses Torreja Construction as a front corporation. Among the papers submitted by Torreja Construction was a letter from Perez "endorsing" the company. It was also disclosed that Per-

from "Government employees against GMA", p. 13

would be saved if the government does away with the budget allocations for these agencies.

But Macapagal-Arroyo was forced to shelve plans to dissolve the agencies due to intense opposition from the employees. She was compelled to immediately call off plans to dissolve the National Printing Office (NPO) under the Office of the Press Secretary after NPO employees disclosed that the

real reason behind her plans to dissolve these agencies was her desire to subsume their operations to her minions and cronies. In fact, some of the agencies that are set to be dissolved like the NPO and the Telecommunications Office under the Department of Transportation and Communications are actually profitable and are not government liabilities. **AB**

William Hinton, Joan Hinton and Erwin "Sid" Engst

A tribute to true proletarian internationalists and anti-imperialists

On August 1, the International League of Peoples' Struggle paid tribute to beloved comrades William "Bill" Hinton, Joan Hinton and Erwin "Sid" Engst. They received the highest tribute as loyal proletarian internationalists and anti-imperialists.

They have devoted more than 50 years of their lives advancing socialism in China and resisting US imperialism.

They were only in their twenties when they left the US to go to China in the 1940s. There, Bill, Joan and Sid became known as Han Ding, Han Chun and Yang Zao. They took part in the great socialist revolution and construction of China.

Their huge contributions to the implementation of agrarian reform, the advancement of socialist cooperation and the mechanization of agriculture are undeniable.

Comrade Bill wrote the books *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* and *Shenfan: The Continuing Revolution in a Chinese Village* (accounts of experiences in waging revolution in a Chi-



ez's men had been blocking other entities interested in the P41 million project.

Another exposé concerns Perez and Macapagal-Arroyo's involvement in the anomalous government contract with Impresas Metalurgicas Pescarmona Sociedad Anonima of Argentina (IMPISA). It will be recalled that Macapagal-Arroyo approved the IMPISA contract for the rehabilitation and expansion of the Caliraya-Botocan-Kalayaan hydroelectric power complex just two days after she took power.

In exchange for such indecent haste, Perez and Macapagal-Arroyo received P700 million. According to no less than a senate study, the Macapagal-Arroyo regime connived to overstate by \$41 million (more than P2 billion) the company's expenses for the rehabilitation aspect, which was unnecessary. Thus, the cost of running the plant has risen from P0.65/kwh to P0.81/kwh. The increase of P0.16/kwh translates to P8 billion in additional electricity

charges for consumers in the form of the purchased power adjustment or PPA.

10% of public funds

The Arroyo couple also receives kickbacks from funds of profitable government agencies. According to government employees, Macapagal-Arroyo has imposed a "10% policy," especially on government financial institutions. Under this scheme, Macapagal-Arroyo obliges her minions within the GFIs to centralize 10% of the funds of their respective agencies and departments for her election kitty. In fact, the Arroyos themselves supervise the fund procurements from certain agencies and departments with the help of their close friends and cronies.

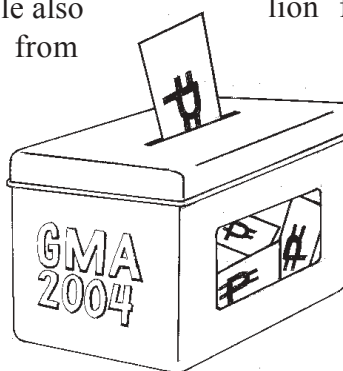
One example involves the Arroyo couple's extortion from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes

Office (PCSO). This October, news leaked out about the anomalous approval by the PCSO board of directors of an additional P60 mil-

lion for Macapagal-Arroyo's advertisements. Prior to this, P250 million had already been allotted by the PCSO for the entire year, but P241.6 million had already been used up as of October. Among others, the money was spent for

worthless and mendacious advertisements on cheap medicines, prizes for a golf tournament. The PCSO is headed by Virgilio Angelo, a close friend of Mike Arroyo.

Aside from the couple's known friends and operators, the Arroyos' close friend Gloria Tan-Climaco as well as their minions like DHUD Sec. Michael Defensor and Executive Sec. Alberto Romulo also act as their personal "collectors" for various departments, agencies and even private contracts. **AB**



nese village) and *The Great Reversal: The Privatization of China, 1978-1989* (a critical study of capitalist restoration in China).

Early in his stay in China, Comrade Bill became intensely interested in waging agrarian reform. He proposed to become an observer and take part in agrarian reform in a community where he integrated with the peasantry. He contributed much in teaching correct farming methods and the mechanization of agriculture.

Comrade Sid, on the other hand, went to China on the invitation of his close friend Comrade Bill. He witnessed the corruption of the Kuomintang government that wrought widespread hunger and poverty among the Chinese. When the Chinese people overthrew the reactionary Kuomintang government, Comrades Bill and Sid decided to live in China to contribute to socialist revolution and construction.

Meanwhile, Comrade Bill's younger sister Comrade Joan used to work in Los Alamos, New Mexico as one of the scientists contracted by the US government to build the atom bomb. She was angry when the US dropped atom bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan in 1945, killing about a million civilians. She was among the scientists who organized themselves to oppose military control over nuclear bombs. Upon her brother's invitation, she went to China in 1948 and likewise decided to stay. There, she married Comrade Sid.

During the socialist construction under Comrade Mao Zedong's leadership, Comrades Sid and Joan took part in designing and constructing equipment needed by the Chinese people. Comrade Joan became a dairy and poultry technician and designed agricultural machinery.

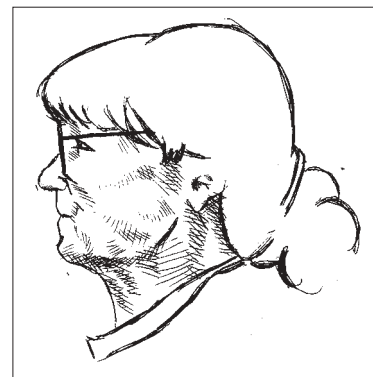
When Deng Xiaoping initiated the government's pro-capitalist policies at the

end of the 1970s, they did not hesitate to assail the restoration of capitalism in China. Even if the bourgeoisie now dominate China, the three comrades remain true to socialist aspirations and proletarian internationalism.

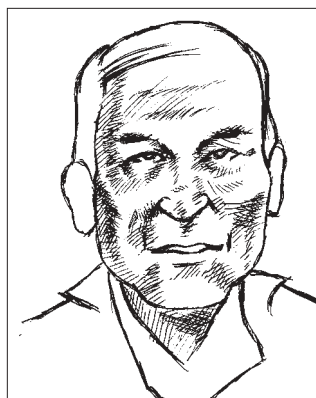
PHILIPPINE revolutionaries and progressives maintain close relations and cooperate with them in the fight against imperialism. The three were among those who signed the General Declaration on Mao Zedong Thought in 1993 that endorsed the theory and practice of continuing revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat to defeat revisionism, block capitalist restoration and consolidate socialism.

In 1996, Comrades Bill and Joan actively took part in the People's Campaign Against Imperialist Globalization that was held in the Philippines. They contributed much to the discussion on imperialism during this gathering, which started off a series of protests in various areas of the globe against imperialism and agencies such as the IMF, World Bank and the WTO.

Comrades Bill, Joan and Sid have vast experience in advancing socialist revolution and construction. They are living witnesses to its correctness and that of Maoism. Despite many opportunities for living luxurious lives, they chose to serve the ordinary people of China and the whole world. With full courage, they, along with other revolutionaries and progressives the world over, wage resistance against US imperialism. **AB**



They devoted more than 50 years of their lives advancing socialism in China and resisting US imperialism.



Continuation of peace talks urged

More than 100,000 people signed the Pilgrims for Peace manifesto calling for the immediate resumption of peace talks between the NDFP and the GRP.

The signatories included, among others, Vice President Teofisto Guingona and Senator Loren Legarda.

The signatories to the manifesto belie Macapagal-Arroyo's statement that 95% of Filipinos do not want the peace talks to continue.

The manifesto declared: "Even as we condemn all forms of terrorism, we are gravely concerned that the Macapagal-Arroyo government's all-out support for the US 'war on terror'...will jeopardize the peace negotiations."

There is greater relevance in demanding the resumption of peace talks in the face of the growing offensive of US imperialism and its allies to destroy the GRP-NDFP negotiations. On October 28, the European Union declared the New People's Army and NDFP senior political consultant Comrade Jose Ma. Sison as "terrorist." The move was spurred by the US and came in the wake of a systematic campaign by the Macapagal-Arroyo regime to malign the revolutionary

movement in the Philippines before the countries of the European Union.

According to NDFP negotiating panel head Comrade Luis Jalandoni, the declaration by the European Union will destroy the peace talks and inflame the civil war in the Philippines.

Comrade Sison belied the Macapagal-Arroyo regime's claims that there were continuing "back-channel talks" between the GRP and NDFP despite the absence of formal negotiations. In a radio interview on October 26, Comrade Sison said that they have not been approached by any GRP representative. The truth is, he said, "the only ones engaged in negotiations are Gen. Eduardo Ermita and Sec. Angelo Reyes. They're just kidding around with each other," he added.

The Party, through its spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, condemned US imperialism and the GRP's sinister scheme to corner the revolutionary movement and compel it to surrender. Ka Roger said that the revolutionary movement will continue building the foundations of a genuine, just and lasting peace, with or without the peace negotiations.

"Talon Vision 02" opposed

The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas led peasants from Southern Tagalog, Bicol, Cordillera and Cagayan Valley in launching a protest caravan against "Talon Vision 02." The caravan from Manila was met by peasants from Central Luzon led by the Alyansa ng mga Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon before proceeding to the Clark Ecozone in Angeles City, Pampanga on October 23.

The peasants roundly criticized the "Talon Vision 02" joint military exercises conducted October 14-27. Seven-hundred US Marines and 400 AFP soldiers held joint war games in Cavite, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac and Pampanga.

The exercises were made to coincide with the regime's intensified counterrevolutionary war dubbed as Oplan Gordian Knot.

Various mass organizations assailed "Talon Vision." When the "National Day of Protest" was held in Manila on October 21, some 5,000 people condemned the Macapagal-Arroyo regime and its US

imperialist master for beating the war drums against patriotic and liberation movements that serve as threats and obstacles to the dominance of imperialist interests around the globe.

Lightning rally in Malacañang violently dispersed

Up to 30 persons were injured when police violently dispersed a lightning rally held in front of Malacañang on October 18 at around 10 a.m. Some 100 members of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, Kilusang Mayo Uno and PAMALAKAYA were engaged in peaceful protest when they were truncheoned by police. The dispersal lasted for almost an hour. The protest action was launched to assail and condemn the Macapagal-Arroyo regime's intensification of the counterrevolutionary war.

Jeepney drivers strike

Jeepney drivers launched a half-day transport strike on October 29 in Metro Manila and other cities. The strike was led by the Pinagkaisang Samahan ng mga TsUPER at Operators Nationwide (Piston). According to Piston chair Medardo Roda, the half-day strike was launched to protest relentless oil price increases.

Piston threatened to wage a bigger strike with the next oil price hike.



MMDA sued over vendor's death

The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) filed charges against Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) chair Bayani Fernando for the death of vendor Iladio Tuacar in a violent demolition in Magallanes, Makati at the end of September. Tuacar was killed when he was

shot twice in the back by one of the policemen enforcing an MMDA order to eject all sidewalk vendors from Metro Manila. BAYAN and vendors' organizations also condemned Tuacar's killing in a rally in Makati on October 2.

KARAPATAN office in Butuan City ransacked

Unidentified men broke into and ransacked the KARAPATAN office in Butuan City on September 28. They are suspected to be military intelligence operatives because only documents and a computer hard disk were taken. This occurred between the night of September 27 and early morning of September 28.

The missing items contained records of human rights violations, interviews and reports of fact-finding missions and sworn testimonies of victims and witnesses in human rights abuse cases.

Military bombings spur evacuation of Lanao del Sur residents

At least three barangays in Lanao del Sur have been affected by bombings by Philippine Air Force planes of forested areas in the towns of Pualas and Sultan Gumander on September 12 and 13. Even as Col. Ernesto Boac arrogantly said that the operations would protect the community from violence, it was the military's bombing sorties that caused the forcible evacuation of residents away from their ruined homes and sources of livelihood. Colonel Boac is the commander of the Philippine Army's 401st Infantry Brigade based in Marawi City.

Meralco fails in bribe try vs. Ka Bel

Meralco tried many times in vain to bribe Bayan Muna congressman Crispin "Ka Bel" Beltran. Meralco had tried to bribe Ka Bel to stop him from criticizing the company. Ka Bel had refused since April to pay Meralco the purchased power adjustment, in protest. Because of its failure to bribe Ka Bel and the latter's refusal to change his stand, Meralco cut off the militant congressman's electric power on October 24.

Plunder Watch questions Marcelo appointment

Plunder Watch has questioned the appointment of Simeon Marcelo as Ombudsman. In a statement on October 11, Plunder Watch said that his appointment was railroaded and not meticulously deliberated. It said that Marcelo was incapable of taking an independent stand because of his closeness to the Arroyos. Marcelo held a ranking position at the Carpio, Villaraza and Cruz law firm, which has been in the service of the Arroyos for years. The law firm has likewise received many favors from the regime.

Plunder Watch also criticized the inutility of the team of prosecutors in the Estrada trial. Marcelo was part of this team before his appointment as an ombudsman.

Filipino airport inspectors in US booted out

Up to 1,000 Filipino airport screeners in the US have been terminated in a mass layoff this October. The layoffs were the offshoot of the cruel Aviation Security Act that was passed by the Bush government in November 2001. The law prohibits the hiring of non-US citizens as airport screeners. The real reasons behind the layoffs, however, are current US restrictions on any nationality suspected of generating "terrorists." They include Arabs, Afghans and Pakistanis and lately, even Filipinos, Malaysians and Indonesians.

GMA throws a fit as Bush vetoes \$30 M military aid for RP

Macapagal-Arroyo looked like a child throwing a temper tantrum last October 8 when she slammed her fist on her desk after finding out that US President George Bush did not approve \$30 million in military aid that had been promised the regime. Macapagal-Arroyo went ballistic, saying that she wasn't even compensated for her all-out support for the US "war against terrorism." To further show her pique, Macapagal-Arroyo cancelled to go to Washington DC on October 29 after attending the 10th Asia-Pacific Economic Forum meeting in Los Cabos, Mexico.

Budget deficit balloons to P166.5 B

The budget deficit for January to September ballooned to P166.5 billion. This is P60.139 billion more than the target deficit for this period. It is also 36.3% bigger than the deficit for the same period in 2002, and is P10 billion greater than the targeted P155 billion for



the whole year. National Treasurer Sergio Edeza also said that the budget deficit could reach P190 billion by the end of this year.

Economy worse off—survey

The vast majority, or 88.6%, of Metro Manilans said the state of the economy was “worse” (45.78%) or “remained the same” (42.89%), according to a survey conducted by IBON Foundation from September 30-October 5.

Meanwhile, only 6.7% of the respondents said that they believed the economy was recovering.

The survey belies official government reports that the people’s lot has improved. Among others, the Commission on Population reported on October 2 that only 40% of Filipinos were mired in poverty.

Protests against imperialist war on Iraq spreads

Since September, the movement against the US imperialist war has continued to expand and gain strength not only in Europe and Asia but also within the US itself.

On October 26, the first anniversary of the signing of the Patriot Act, more than 100,000 Americans from various parts of the country gathered in Washington DC to assert their right to express opposition to the imperialist war on Afghanistan and Iraq. Simultaneously, up to 80,000 people poured out into the streets of San Francisco City while 10,000 rallied in Minnesota. Mass actions were also held in other parts of the country like Seattle (5,000), New York (2,000), Maine (3,000) and many other areas. At the same time, tens of thousands rallied in The Netherlands and 400,000 in Spain. The militant protest actions were generally peaceful.



Prior to this, various mass organizations in the US under the coalition “Not in Our Name” launched a “national day of resistance” on October 6-7 against the planned US war on Iraq. In Manhattan Central, New York, among those who spoke were famous actors Susan Sarandon, Tim Robbins and Martin Sheen. Some 20,000 workers, actors, directors, writers and intellectuals joined the march.

Strike rocks Italy

A general strike against economic plans by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi within the imperialist “globalization” framework paralyzed most of Italy on October 18. Two million workers thronged to the streets and 10 million laborers supported the call by the Confederazione Generale Italiana de Lavoro or CGIL, the biggest union in Italy.

The protest action was sparked by car manufacturer Fiat’s attempt to lay off more than 8,000 workers. The workers protested the move in mass actions that included huge protest marches. This was followed by a 200,000-strong workers’ rally in Turin and a 250,000-strong march in Milan.

Protests continue in Palestine

The New Intifada—the Palestinian people’s uprising to free themselves from Israeli occupation—continues to advance.

Some 2,000 persons marched in Gaza Strip on October 4 and 6 to condemn US support for Israel. They called on Arabs, Muslims and Christians to unite and oppose US support for Israeli aggression. Some 3,000 Hamas sympathizers also rallied at the Jabalya refugee camp in Gaza Strip.

The next day, 400 Islamic guerrillas burned Israeli and US flags. In Nablus, West Bank, rallyists defied the curfew and marched, shouting “America is the head of the snake.”

Errata in the AB October 2002 English edition. On page 5. The NPA raid in Maco, Compostela Valley on September 24, 2002 was launched by the Merardo Arce Command’s 3rd Pulang Bagani Company and not by the Rhyme Petalcorin Command as was reported. Seized in the Maco raid were 34 firearms (not 33) and two pieces (not one) of communications equipment. Comrade Jumabok Kadyawan is the spokesperson of the Antonio “Nerio” Antao Command of the New People’s Army in Southern Mindanao, and not of the Rhyme Petalcorin Command. On page 8, in the first part of the article “Opposition to war on Iraq spreads.” Four-hundred thousand (400,000) persons (not just 150,000) attended the London rally. At the end of the article, it was erroneously reported that the prize given to the Magsaysay awardees came from the Rockefeller Foundation. The prize came from the Ford Foundation.